

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for preparing a hand-held snack item, said method comprising:

(a) applying a first edible, heat-sensitive food material to an initial formed hand-held food item, thereby forming a preliminary coated hand-held food item;

(b) applying a second edible food coating material to said preliminary coated hand-held food item, thereby forming a secondary coated hand-held food item, wherein said second edible food material is applied to said preliminary coated hand-held food item in such a manner as to substantially completely coat said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, and wherein said second edible food material is selected from a material which possesses sufficient physical characteristics to act as a protective medium for said first edible, heat-sensitive food material when said secondary coated hand-held food item is subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and

(c) subjecting said secondary coated hand-held food item to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the

range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds, thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack item wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is substantially intact.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a grain cake prepared from grains selected from the group consisting of rice, corn and popcorn, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 1% to about 40% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy products, fruit pieces, cinnamon, chocolate powder, cocoa, pieces of nuts, sesame seeds, pieces of ham, pieces of bacon, and mixtures thereof.

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein said initial formed hand-held food item is a rice cake, wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 30% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy pieces, fruit pieces, cinnamon, and mixtures thereof.

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4. A method according to claim 3 wherein said preliminary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 20% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive food material are chocolate chips.

5 5. A method according to claim 2 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 5% to about 65% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 10% to about 80% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 10% to about 90% by weight of a viscosity providing agent, from about 5% to 10 about 80% by weight flavoring ingredients, from 0% to about 90% by weight bulking substance, from 0% to about 30% by weight fatty acid glycerides, and the balance being water.

6. A method according to claim 3 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 10% to about 60% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 20% to about 70% by weight of said 5 second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and

wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 20% to about 80% by weight viscosity providing agent selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn syrup and mixtures thereof, from about 5% to about 70% by weight flavoring ingredients selected from the group consisting of salt, cocoa powder, cheese powder, natural and artificial flavoring agents, and mixtures thereof, from 0% to about 80% by weight bulking substance selected from the group consisting of starch, cellulose fiber, bean fiber and mixtures thereof, from about 1% to about 20% by weight fatty acid glycerides selected from the group consisting of vegetable oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, cottonseed oil, cannola oil, soybean oil, and mixtures thereof, with the balance being water.

7. A method according to claim 4 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item comprises from about 15% to about 30% by weight of said first edible, heat-sensitive food material; and from about 30% to about 60% by weight of said second edible food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed hand-held food item; and wherein said second edible food coating material is a liquid syrup composition comprising from about 50% to about 70% by weight sucrose, from about 5% to about 15% by weight flavoring ingredients, from about 1% to about 6% by weight vegetable oil, and the balance being water.

8. A method according to claim 5 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 75°C to about 250°C for a period of time in the range of from about 60 minutes to about 60 seconds.

9. A method according to claim 6 wherein said secondary coated hand-held food item is dried in an oven by being subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 125°C to about 175°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 minutes to about 2 minutes.

10. A method for preparing a hand-held snack item, said method comprising:

- (a) preparing a primary edible, liquid food coating material comprising from about 10% to about 90% by weight of a viscosity providing agent, from about 5% to about 80% by weight flavoring ingredients, from 0% to about 90% by weight bulking substance, from 0% to about 30% by weight fatty acid glycerides, and the balance being water;
- (b) combining said primary edible, liquid food coating material with an edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient at a ratio of about 10:1 to about 0.5:1 (primary edible, liquid food coating material:edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient),

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thereby forming a secondary edible, liquid food coating material;

- (c) applying said secondary edible, liquid food coating material to an initial formed hand-held food item, thereby forming a coated hand-held food item, wherein said secondary edible, liquid food coating material is applied to said initial formed hand-held food item in such a manner as to substantially completely coat said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient as it is applied to the initial formed hand-held food item as part of said secondary edible, liquid food coating material, and wherein said primary edible, liquid food coating material possesses sufficient physical characteristics to act as a protective medium for said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient when said coated hand-held food item is subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and
- (d) drying said coated hand-held food item in an oven by subjecting said coated hand-held food item to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds, thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack item

wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient is substantially intact.

11. A method according to claim 10 wherein said secondary edible, liquid food coating comprises from about 20% to about 80% by weight viscosity providing agent selected from the group consisting of sucrose, glucose, fructose, corn syrup and mixtures thereof, from about 5% to about 70% by weight flavoring ingredients selected from the group consisting of salt, cocoa powder, cheese powder, natural and artificial flavoring agents, and mixtures thereof, from 0% to about 80% by weight bulking substance selected from the group consisting of starch, cellulose fiber, bean fiber and mixtures thereof, from about 1% to about 20% by weight fatty acid glycerides selected from the group consisting of vegetable oil, sunflower oil, safflower oil, cottonseed oil, canola oil, soybean oil, and mixtures thereof, with the balance being water; wherein the ratio of primary edible, liquid food coating material to edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient in the secondary edible, liquid food coating material is in the range of from about 8:1 to about 1:1 (primary edible, liquid food coating material:edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient), and wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient is selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips, cheese and dairy products, fruit pieces, cinnamon, chocolate powder, cocoa, pieces of

nuts, sesame seeds, pieces of ham, pieces of bacon, and
25 mixtures thereof.

12. A method according to claim 11 wherein said secondary
edible, liquid food coating comprises from about 50% to
about 70% by weight sucrose, from about 5% to about 15% by
weight flavoring ingredients, from about 1% to about 6% by
weight vegetable oil, and the balance being water; and
wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient is
selected from the group consisting of chocolate chips,
cheese and dairy pieces, fruit pieces, cinnamon, and
mixtures thereof.

13. A method according to claim 12 wherein the ratio of
primary edible, liquid food coating material to edible,
heat-sensitive food ingredient in the secondary edible,
liquid food coating material is in the range of from about
6:1 to about 3:1 (primary edible, liquid food coating
material:edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient), and
wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient are
chocolate chips.

14. A method according to claim 11 wherein said coated
hand-held food item comprises from about 70% to about 10% by
weight of said secondary edible, liquid food coating
material, with the balance comprising the initial formed
hand-held food item.

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15. A method according to claim 12 wherein said coated hand-held food item comprises from about 60% to about 20% by weight of said secondary edible, liquid food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed
5 hand-held food item.

16. A method according to claim 13 wherein said coated hand-held food item comprises from about 50% to about 30% by weight of said secondary edible, liquid food coating material, with the balance comprising the initial formed
5 hand-held food item.

17. A method according to claim 14 wherein said coated hand-held food item is dried at a temperature in the range of from about 75°C to about 250°C for a period of time in the range of from about 60 minutes to about 60 seconds.

18. A method according to claim 15 wherein said coated hand-held food item is dried at a temperature in the range of from about 125°C to about 175°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 minutes to about 2 minutes.

19. A hand-held snack item prepared according to the method comprising:

- (a) applying a first edible, heat-sensitive food material to an initial formed hand-held food item,

5 thereby forming a preliminary coated hand-held
food item;

- (b) applying a second edible food coating material to
said preliminary coated hand-held food item,
thereby forming a secondary coated hand-held food
10 item, wherein said second edible food material is
applied to said preliminary coated hand-held food
item in such a manner as to substantially
completely coat said first edible, heat-sensitive
food material, and wherein said second edible food
material is selected from a material which
possesses sufficient physical characteristics to
act as a protective medium for said first edible,
heat-sensitive food material when said secondary
coated hand-held food item is subjected to a
temperature in the range of from about 35°C to
about 350°C for a period of time in the range of
from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and

- (c) subjecting said secondary coated hand-held food
item to a temperature in the range of from about
25 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the
range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds,
thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack
item wherein said first edible, heat-sensitive
food material is substantially intact.

20. A hand-held snack item prepared according to the method comprising:

- (a) preparing a primary edible, liquid food coating material comprising from about 10% to about 90% by weight of a viscosity providing agent, from about 5% to about 80% by weight flavoring ingredients, from 0% to about 90% by weight bulking substance, from 0% to about 30% by weight fatty acid glycerides, and the balance being water;
- (b) combining said primary edible, liquid food coating material with an edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient at a ratio of about 10:1 to about 0.5:1 (primary edible, liquid food coating material:edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient), thereby forming a secondary edible, liquid food coating material;
- (c) applying said secondary edible, liquid food coating material to an initial formed hand-held food item, thereby forming a coated hand-held food item, wherein said secondary edible, liquid food coating material is applied to said initial formed hand-held food item in such a manner as to substantially completely coat said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient as it is applied to the initial formed hand-held food item as part of said secondary edible, liquid food coating material, and wherein said primary edible, liquid food

coating material possesses sufficient physical characteristics to act as a protective medium for said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient when said coated hand-held food item is subjected to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds; and

- (d) drying said coated hand-held food item in an oven by subjecting said coated hand-held food item to a temperature in the range of from about 35°C to about 350°C for a period of time in the range of from about 10 hours to about 30 seconds, thereby producing a final, coated hand-held snack item wherein said edible, heat-sensitive food ingredient is substantially intact.